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162, 166, 619, 101, 622, 361, 438

/For an account of the settled tribes of Oman and the Trucial Coast in 1920--territory occupied, rulers, brief history, their settlements, means of livelihood, etc. see 30: Great Britain, Saudi Arabia MJ1, category 116, pp. 546-602./

TABLE I—*Continued*

STATE	POLITICAL STATUS	CAPITAL AND POPULATION	REPORTED BOUNDARIES	REMARKS
KALBA	Trucial sheikhdom since 1937.	Kalba, 3000 to 5000	On the coast of the Gulf of 'Oman north at Dibba, south at Khor Kalba; includes territory on the west side of the mountains of 'Oman.	In the past tributary to Sharjah.
'OMAN	Independent British-protected sultanate.	Muscat, 500,000	Exclave on the peninsula of Musandam west at Sha'am, east at Dibba; main territory on Gulf of 'Oman east of Khor Kalba.	'Oman sovereignty over peninsula of Musandam established with British help.
OTHER TERRITORIES:				
FUJAIRAH	Sheikhdom without Trucial status.	....	Probably exclave in Kalba located primarily near the Gulf of 'Oman.	In the past probably tributary to Sharjah.
BURAIMI	Neutral area claimed by Saudi Arabia, 'Oman, and Abu Dhabi.	5000	Probably bounded by many Trucial sheikhdoms and 'Oman.	Inland oasis reported before 1925 and today under the influence of Abu Dhabi.
HAFIT	Reported joint property of Abu Dhabi and 'Oman.	....	....	Near Buraimi.
DHAID	Reported as neutral part of Sharjah, and part of Kalba.	....	....	On frontier road from the Persian Gulf to Oman.
LIWA	Political control nowhere described.	....	....	Southwest of Abu Dhabi; reported to be trading with Abu Dhabi.

[a] Parts of the region between the boundaries of Qatar and the town of Abu Dhabi may be territory of Saudi Arabia. South of the town of Abu Dhabi there may be territory of the Trucial sheikhdoms or of Saudi Arabia or of 'Oman or of Aden Protectorate.

As Sir Percey Cox[1] writes: "The relative position of the Principalities . . . depends almost entirely on the personalities of the ruling Shaikhs for the time being. Unfortunately, owing to the chronic prevalence . . . of . . . feuds, they have for the last few generations been a short-lived 'class.'" Besides the territories of the sheikhs, there are neutral areas. In one of them, the Buraimi Oasis, near the border of 'Oman, a durbar (an official meeting of all the Trucial sheikhs with a British representative) took place in 1945;[8] this inconveniently located place was selected because sheikhs' wars prevented the choice of a better place near the coast. Another neutral area (although there seems to be a difference of opinion on its status) is the oasis of Dhaid,[9] on the motorcar route from Sharjah to the

[8] O'Shea, *op. cit.* [see footnote 3, above], p. 171. See below (p. 204) for other claims to Buraimi.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 156. See also Desmond Vesey-Fitzgerald: From Hasa to Oman by Car, *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 42, 1952, pp. 344-360; reference on p. 353.

[1] [For footnote, see p. 197 of text -- Analyst]

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to the majority of professing Christians. If an easy acceptance of poor and insanitary living conditions is one of the major faults of this race, as I believe it is, then such a shortcoming is easily counterbalanced by their innumerable virtues, which are seldom found in practice amongst Englishmen.

I have not had the opportunity to make a deep study of social problems in Arabia, but from my interpretation of what I have seen, I should not hesitate to lay the blame for the vices and backwardness of Arab life on the system of government which obtains in most regions. In principle it is comparable with the feudal system in Europe. Apart from the Bedouin country, where life is migratory and the tribes are tent-dwellers, the majority of Arabs are concentrated in the fertile valleys, where they can obtain water for their livestock and crops. In Oman, as in other parts of the continent, the coastal areas are ruled by paramount sheikhs, whose power is absolute and who are sometimes elected by their subjects, but who are more generally appointed by succession, the kingdom thus remaining in the hands of one family. Although many of these princely families are quite ancient, and have provided rulers for different sheikhdoms for centuries, it is not unusual to find one sheikh deposing another by force. Jealousy and a greed for more territory and power are frequently the root cause of tribal wars.

There is little that is democratic in the government of a sheikhdom. Through his judges and ministers, who are paid out of the royal purse, the sheikh administers justice. Often it is the justice of a tyrant, although some sheikhs are just and kindly and are regarded by their subjects more as 'fathers of the people' than as kings. All land belongs to the sheikh, who is theoretically custodian for his tribe, and he exacts revenues from merchants, shopkeepers, fishermen, pearling-fleet owners and merchants, camel breeders and farmers, in the form of a commission on all business, in addition to heavy taxes on the inhabitants of the towns and villages. There are, too, taxes on land and property, on fishing and pearling rights, and profits are even obtained from the sale (illegal and contrary to the treaties with the British Government, but still indulged in) of slave labour.

Apart from the pearling industry, one of the richest sources of income in Arabia is from the date plantations, and these, if not actually owned by the sheikhs, at least provide him with a handsome additional income. In recent years the Arab rulers have been considerably enriched by large sums paid for concessions by the oil

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Occasionally we would hear the shrill voice of the *Muezzin* as he chanted from the mosque tower, and those who were caught napping in the streets or desert would fall on their knees straight away and prostrate themselves to the ground. The Arab method of [illegible] is both complicated and physically uncomfortable. The [illegible] is said standing, but after each prayer the worshipper, facing the east, will fall on his knees, touching the ground several times with his forehead. The guards in the Fort had the habit of performing their religious rites and exercises in front of my office door and, as I did not like to disturb them at such times, the practice proved a trifle inconvenient.

At seven-thirty Bird drove Allison and myself to the sheikh's palace, which was a rather unimposing residence about a quarter of a mile away. The real palace, or fort, from which the royal flag fluttered from a ruined tower, was only a few yards away, but it was seldom used as a residence. Originally built by the Portuguese when they invaded the Persian Gulf in the seventeenth century, it had been renovated and partially rebuilt in desert style by successive sheikhs, but the present ruler believed in retrenchment rather than expenditure. He had no intention of spending his money on the upkeep of so pretentious a relic, which was imposing in a ruinous way from the outside, but within shabby and dilapidated in the extreme. In cool weather he would sit with his entourage on a bench outside the great gateway, but the interior was used only by his sons as a kind of gigantic playroom, or by some of his retinue for indulging in shady deals or illegal hashish smoking.

The main residence, to which we were now driving, was a two-storeyed house with a fretted balcony, Moorish windows and a heavily studded door of plain tulip wood. A high mud wall rose up to the windows on one side, and behind this lay the harem. We were met on the steps by the sheikh, Sultan bin Saqr, his three sons, and about a dozen bearded gentlemen with gilded swords and rifles. They formed the sheikh's retinue, and were secretaries, ministers, advisers of some sort and, generally speaking, 'hangers-on', it being a custom of that country for members of the court to attach themselves to the ruler and live at his expense. The cost of maintaining such an entourage and household was about a thousand rupees a day, I was informed; that is, in English money at the present rate of exchange, about £25. Needless to say, the greater part of this sum was derived from taxes and rents.

Sultan bin Saqr wore a perfumed robe of embroidered linen,

622 291 with a triple aggal of gold thread above his flowered silk head-dress, or kufieyh. His sandals were likewise embroidered with gold thread, and he wore his ceremonial gold sword and curved *hangar*. His three sons, aged six, ten and twelve, were similarly dressed, whilst the nobles, although garbed more simply, managed to create an air of affluence. One marked difference was that the sheikh's beard was luxuriously oiled, combed and scented, whereas the beards of his courtiers were ragged, unkempt and rather dirty.

622 342 Closely guarded by a ruffianly gang of armed thugs, the sheikh, after embracing us, took us into the inner courtyard. This was a plain, unfurnished room with a floor of black and white marble squares, where the sheikh, his sons, and the Khan Bahadur, an old [576] friend of ours, whose name was Abdur bin Razzak, removed their sandals prior to entering the throne room. As Europeans entering an Arab house do not remove their shoes, it being considered beneath their dignity to do so (although in reality the practice has a religious basis and would, therefore, have no meaning for an infidel), we followed the royal party after divesting ourselves of our hats. These, together with our torches, we were advised by Abdur bin Razzak to keep in our possession, otherwise they might be difficult to recover afterwards!

[353] The throne room was a long, bare apartment with undecorated, distempered walls broken only by a frieze of the inevitable Moorish pattern. The floor was covered with exquisite Persian rugs, and at the end of the room were half a dozen chairs of Victorian Gothic design covered with purple cushions. It takes a long time to sit 576 down in an Arab house. It is customary for the host to make the pretence of motioning the guest to a chair; the guest is expected to refuse the invitation and, in turn, to motion the host to his own chair. When there are several guests, this absurd ritual of gesticulation can continue for several minutes. Eventually the sheikh settled himself in the largest chair, or throne, and we arranged ourselves in order of precedence on either side of him. Since Captain 000 Bird was the only one who spoke Arabic at all fluently, and Abdur bin Razzak the only Arab present who spoke any English, conversation with the sheikh and his sons had to be conducted through these two intermediaries. I have often suspected later that the eldest son, Abdul, had quite a useful command of English, but he never showed the slightest sign of understanding a word that we said. When I got to know him better, however, and found out

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what a cunning little monkey he was, I was more circumspect in the remarks I let drop to my friends in the sheikh's presence.

During a formal visit of this kind the conversation inevitably begins with remarks about the weather, the state of one's health and other commonplaces, and by degrees veers to more practical subjects until, eventually, the subject one really wishes to discuss is delicately touched upon. Certain matters, such as references to women and religion, should never be mentioned, unless one is really exceptionally intimate with one's host. Unsuspecting visitors to Arabia frequently cause offence in this manner. It is also considered bad manners to ask too many questions, even on matters in which one may naturally be very interested, such as Arab customs and tradition.

Experience is the only guide in such things, and one learns in time the correct way of phrasing a sentence to which the required answer will be courteously given, without being too gauche or direct. I am afraid that Allison and I broke the rules rather badly on this occasion, for we rained innumerable questions upon the sheikh through our able interpreter, Abdur bin Razzak. Yet I often wondered afterwards whether this very able diplomat did not discreetly change the questions into honeyed words of flattery, for the sheikh seemed as pleased with our catechism as we were with his replies! Among the subjects discussed were locusts, Persian rugs, wheat supplies, the price of goods from India, the numbers of aircraft we were expecting that week and in the future, and the prospects of the date crop.

Throughout this conversational session (a customary preamble to a meal), we were aware of being closely scrutinized by the other guests, who, together with the ruffianly guards, stood impatiently in the courtyard awaiting the signal to go in to dinner. We were presently joined by a young Arab of dark, almost negroid complexion and features, with an elaborate scarlet turban, which reminded us of the robber king's head-dress in *Chu Chin Chow*. After making a low obeisance to the sheikh, he permitted himself to be kissed on both cheeks before retiring to a chair. This young man, I was afterwards told, was the heir to the Kalba sheikhdom, but, being under age, the affairs of his land were managed by the Regent, a relative of the sheikh's.

A story of typical Arab intrigue surrounded this young prince. His father, the sheikh of Kalba, had been murdered by a rival sheikh who had his eye on the fertile valleys and date plantations of

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622 Kalba. There was a lengthy dispute as to who should succeed to the sheikhdom, with the appearance of a wicked uncle who tried on several occasions to do away with his young nephew, who would legally succeed his father. The sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah tried by various means to acquire the sheikhdom, but eventually the British Government stepped in and appointed the Sheikh of Sharjah's nephew as Regent. This wily Arab was not at all anxious for young Ali to ascend the throne when he came of age, and various devices had to be thought of to keep Ali out of harm's way.

At one time the British Resident in Bushire had the idea of sending him to the Princes' School in Persia, an academy run on English public school lines, to which the sons of the Indian princes were sent. It was considered that not only would such a step be prudent from a political point of view, but that it was advisable for the future ruler to have a sound education. Young Ali, however, would have none of this, and he ran away after the first term. At the time of our visit, he was under the protection of our host, the Sheikh of Sharjah. Handsome in a negro fashion, he was a sulky-looking youth and, I was confidentially informed, was already a past-master in the traditional desert intrigues.

144 827 173 Although the sheikhs of Oman are exceedingly proud of their descent, which in some cases extends to the sixteenth century and derives from some Saiyed, or descendant of the Prophet, there is a fair amount of intermarriage with the more beautiful of their slaves. Thus, even in the aristocratic Qasimi family, a powerful tribe which once ruled the greater part of Oman—and to which Sultan bin Saqr belongs—there are traces of negro blood. Oddly enough, the Arabs are not in the least ashamed of such admixtures. They believe that it gives them virility and strength, and there may be something to be said for the theory.

264 A lull had fallen upon the conversation, when one of the sheikh's sons approached his father and began to whisper in his ear. I imagine it had something to do with the preparation of the meal, for the sheikh rose from his chair and beckoned us to follow him to a long, narrow room on the other side of the courtyard. We passed through a fretted doorway and found ourselves in the salle à manger. The floor was liberally strewn with rugs and, on a damask cloth in the middle, there reposed about ten main and five secondary dishes of rice, curry, chipatties, dried fruits and vegetables. The principal dish, in front of which the sheikh seated himself,

transport; there is no flat desert, as at Sharjah, suitable for an air-field, and the mountain ranges are too close for safe flying.

In parenthesis, I learnt that shortly after the Sheikh of Sharjah had agreed to lease his land to the British for the purposes of an airfield, he was secretly murdered by a hired assassin, who crept into his palace while he slept, put his eyes out with a red-hot iron, and slit his throat. The present ruler of Sharjah, Sultan bin Saqr, never sleeps without an armed bodyguard outside his room, and it is whispered that he is waiting to avenge the murder of his father. He has little doubt who instigated the crime.

An old retainer of the Khan Sahib's, a wrinkled Arab with a henna-dyed beard, Ali bin Achmed, came to talk to us. He is employed as a seaman and looks after the petrol dhow on which the emergency stocks provided by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company are stored. He is a distinguished-looking old man, with a fund of stories which he related to us as the sun sank slowly behind the sandhills and the palm trees leant in ragged silhouette against the sapphire-tinted horizon.

The Khan Sahib closed the shutters, lighted a perfumed coil of anti-mosquito powder, and hung a kerosene lamp from a hook in the ceiling. A slave brought us dishes of rice, steamed lamb, curry balls, chipatties, *haloua*, fruit and turkish delight, and, feeling ravenous, we ate in silence, seated on Persian rugs with our legs tucked underneath us in Arab style.

After the third cup of clove-scented coffee, we sat in the dim light, smoking cigarettes, while Ali bin Achmed puffed away at his tiny pipeful of hashish. He told us wild stories of shipwrecks on the rocks, and of pirates who plundered the unfortunate vessels and held the passengers to ransom; of British gunboats which shelled the village in reprisal and clapped the headmen in gaol. Then he spoke of the wild men of the mountains, the Shi'hou tribe, who seldom left their dark caves in the hills, and who lived on fish, wild honey and dates. They never mixed with the lowland Arabs, were greatly feared on account of their wild appearance and cruel habits, and were believed to be in league with a djinn.

'There is gold and tin in the mountains,' said Ali, 'but men will not seek for it on account of these wild ones. A man would be rich who dared to climb those cruel slopes and search for the gleaming metal. But, praise be to Allah, it would be a foolhardy enterprise.'

The Shi'hou tribe is a very ancient one, according to Ali, and

mile of shallow water. There was a haze over the land, a sure sign of hot weather ahead, and the straggling town of Ras-al-Khaimah had the blurred appearance of a Whistler pastel. The palace, cornered by battlemented towers with an architectural resemblance to a crusader's castle, was built of pink rock, the rose-red hue of Petra. In the sunlight it had the beauty of a coral shell, hemmed in by the cube-shaped houses of the merchants, walled gardens of date palms and pomegranates, and the gleaming gold dome of the mosque.

We disembarked alongside a little wooden pier and began to trail up the steep, pebbled shore towards the palace. A guard of Beni Yas tribesmen approached with rifles at the ready, until the Khan Sahib gave them a sign and spoke to them in the local dialect. Recognizing him, they bowed respectfully and, after scrutinizing us with a great show of curiosity, ushered us through the tall gateway into the palace courtyard. It was open to the sun, with two tall palm trees growing as high as the verandas, on which lolled Arab retainers in the act of performing their morning toilet. Camels, tied to stakes in the ground, reared up on their knees as we entered and began to snarl in their unpleasant fashion.

Standing in an ornately-decorated doorway was a tall, white-bearded figure, clad in long white robes, with a gold sword belted to his waist. It was Sheikh Sultan bin Salim, ruler of Ras-al-Khaimah. He slowly descended the steps to the courtyard and embraced the Khan Sahib in the Arab style, and then shook hands with each of us in turn. In a few minutes we were joined by the members of the Court, and the procession wended its way into the cool, dim reception chamber at the far end of the palace. The building was in a much better state of repair than the palace at Sharjah, and the floor of the chamber was of black and white marble squares, highly polished by sandals. The chairs, of rosewood inlaid with mother o' pearl, were emblazoned with the sheikh's coat of arms, whilst priceless Shiraz rugs, of wine red and Prussian blue pattern, were scattered on the floor.

Silk cushions were provided for us to sit upon, and after the usual introductory conversation, a slave brought in a pot of fragrant coffee. A large brass tray was placed by our side; this contained numerous sweetmeats, including Turkish delight, and little bowls of pomegranates, oranges and almonds. The sheikh questioned us about our journey, and seemed highly amused when we told him of the breakdown of the cars. He soon started off on a long discourse about the advantages of having an airfield at Ras-al-Khaimah,

006 and pointed out that if we were based there we should have no need of motor-cars. The Khan Sahib tactfully hedged him off this subject, since he realized that I had no desire to commit myself to any statement which the sheikh might construe as an official decision.

622 [471] 245 439 We were on safe ground when we asked him about the date plantations, for the sheikh is one of the largest plantation owners in Oman, and a considerable part of his income is derived from the sale of dates. It appeared that the crop was doing excellently this year, but, owing to the war and the shortage of transport, the demand from foreign countries had dropped considerably. He was, therefore, exporting greater quantities to India and Egypt, although a fair amount was being shipped to South Africa and America. When we told him that people in England had seen very few dates during the war, and that the few which were on [262] sale were rationed, he was very sympathetic. He knew little about English food and, being an Arab, could scarcely imagine how a household could exist without dates.

578 Praise Allah, he said, they had experienced no drought or plague of insects this year, but they had suffered from raids from the hills. The cursed Shi'hou tribesmen (might they die of plague in their filthy caves!) had been attacking and robbing his labourers, so that they were afraid to enter the plantations except in groups, and he had been obliged to employ armed guards to keep them off. That very morning, he explained, he intended to hold a conference of his nobles to plan a campaign of defence against these marauders. He intended to drive them back into their mountains and inflict such heavy punishment that they would not venture into the plains again for many months. If only he had an aeroplane, he said wryly, he would know how to deal with the Shi'hou! 'Like you do in Afghanistan,' he added with a chuckle.

622 The sheikh, who was a fine-looking old man with a patriarchal, weather-beaten face, had a reputation for being one of the most fearless fighters in Oman, and his feud with Sharjah of ten years ago was still talked about in the desert. Hanging on the wall was a long ceremonial sword, with a chased gold handle; it is said that he had swept off the heads of three men with its blade with a single sweep. He had a face of great power, a tight-lipped mouth, a large hooked nose, and keen grey eyes under shaggy eyebrows. Although few of us understood his language, we all fell under the spell of his strong personality. He was kindly and courteous, but

[1. The Sheikh of Ras-al-Kalmah -- Analyst]

we all were sensible that behind the smiling mask lay a mind as keen and poised as the blade of his ceremonial sword.

When we left the palace, the sun was blazing from a cloudless sky and the creek shone like a mirror. We returned to the Khan Sahib's house to pack some refreshments, and then mounted the six camels which he had procured for us and began the eight-mile ride to his summer residence at the foot of the mountains. Although a comparatively short distance, the journey was a tiring one. Apart from a few scattered palm trees, there was no shade, and the sun, being in the meridian, was at its fiercest and beat down upon us mercilessly. The humidity was extremely trying, also: Frew thought it must have been about 80°. The perspiration streamed off our faces and seeped through our shirts. Our camels, also affected by the heat, lumbered along in leisurely fashion, which was not so uncomfortable as when they cantered. We passed several large date plantations, as shady and inviting as an English wood, and noisy with the cries of jays and parakeets. Brilliant-hued butterflies darted among the palm fronds, some of them measuring six inches across the wings.

Crossing a dried-up water course, or *wadhi*, we reached the foot of the hills. Of buff and pink sandstone, they sloped gradually for 300 feet, and were easily climbable for that distance. At that point they gave way to sheer cliffs of black and brown igneous rock, formidable with giant buttresses and massive boulders. Occasionally we glimpsed passes and crevices along the slopes which were honeycombed with caves. In these, the Khan Sahib informed us, the Shi'hou tribes lived. About 2,000 feet up, there were plateaux in the mountains, with small valleys where the tribesmen cultivated corn and sugar canes. We saw nothing of the Shi'hou, however, and after an hour's ride entered a low-lying valley through an avenue of tall neam trees.

There were about twenty houses on this summer estate. Each was a two-storied coral and plaster dwelling, with an open veranda running round the top floor. A low mud wall and a wicket gate divided the properties, each of which had its guard of sleepy-looking Arabs armed with rifles. We dismounted in front of the gateway, leaving our camels in charge of the guard. In contrast to the surrounding desert, the garden was like an illustration from the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment*. White and crimson roses flourished in pots on either side of the path, whilst masses of red and purple bougainvillea trailed over the veranda. There was even a small

[Dear Ras-al-Khaimah — Aug 1st]

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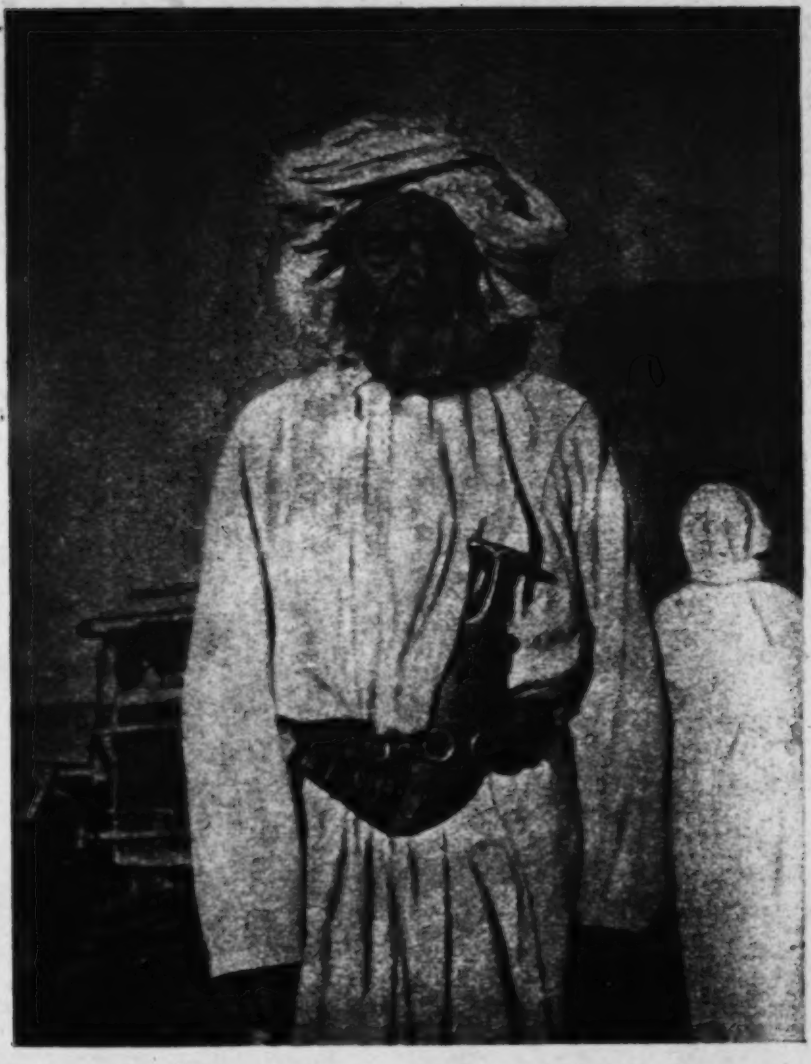

Sheikh Mahomed bin Ali, eighty-year-old ruler of the Beni Qitab tribe

following p. 60 (a)

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H.H. Sheikh Sultan bin Saqr of Sharjah, with his ten-year-old son, Abdul, and Mr. Jasim, the Residency Agent.

following p 60 (f)

721 [361] to one another by marriage, is extremely unlikely. Internecine war is likely only between the nomadic tribes who roam the desert and avoid the towns; they live in goats' hair tents, congregating around the wells and oases in the hot season. The largest and most [620] powerful of these tribes in Oman is that of the Beni Qitab, whose Sheikh is the Mohamed Ali, a fine, tall, white-bearded warrior with a hawk-like nose and piercing eyes. As he is at present on friendly terms with the Khan Bahadur, war against the town sheikhs is unlikely.

CHAPTER VI

THE last war of any importance, as I have stated, was that between Sharjah and Dubai in 1940. The cause of the war was a long-standing feud between the tribes of Bani Yas (Dubai) and Qasimi (Sharjah). There was also a dispute over territorial limits claimed by the sheikhs. The sheikhdom of Dubai is composed of two distinct districts; Dubai town proper, on the west of the creek, and Dera, on the north side. The largest and better-built houses, mostly inhabited by Indian and Persian merchants, as well as the more important shops of the pearl brokers, carpet sellers and goldsmiths, are situated in Dubai town. Here one finds cool, clean narrow streets with high walls, often overhung with Persian rugs to keep off the sun, and pleasant open shops where one may buy anything from a five hundred years' old Bokhara rug or a brass-bound Quaiti chest, to an American wrist-watch or a roll of bread. In the poorer section of Dera, where the fishermen and coolies live, there is a native bazaar and several long streets of shops, but these are dirty, dark and infested with flies. There one may buy items of gaudy Arab clothing, tobacco leaves, and dried food, including fish, spices, nuts, ghee butter, henna bark and rice. Some alleyways are devoted entirely to silversmiths and tinsmiths; the latter are clever craftsmen and can make almost any domestic utensil out of an empty petrol can.

For several hundred years Dubai (which includes, besides the town, several villages and a tract of desert of about fifty square miles), has been ruled by the Al Bu Falaah branch of the Bani Yas clan, who are related to another Al Bu Falaah family, the sheikhs of Abu Dhabi (the 'Place of Gazelles'). Rivalry between the sheikhs of Dubai and their cousins in Dera, on the other side of the creek, may be traced back as far as 1850, when the Ak Bu Mahair family, their cousins, intrigued for ownership of the region. The Mahair were notorious pirates. A British gunboat had occasion to land a ship's crew at Dera to investigate an attack on a merchant ship in Dubai waters. Soon after the sailors from the gunboat had landed they were waylaid in a dark side street and murdered; as a

619 reprisal, the gunboat shelled Dera Town, destroying many houses
622 and killing several of the inhabitants. The British Government then confirmed Maktum bin Buti, of the Bani Yas tribe, as Sheikh of the whole of Dubai, including Dera. Since then there has been unmitigated rivalry between the two houses.

622 The present ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Said bin Maktum, a grand-
721 son of Maktum bin Buti, is a peaceably disposed ruler, but his wife, Husa, or Umm Raschid (mother of Raschid) is a combination of Catharine the Great and Boadicea, and is ambitious into the bargain for her two sons, Raschid and Khalifa. In 1940, following an intrigue against the Sheikh of Dubai, a member of the Mahair family was obliged to flee from Dubai and took refuge with the Sheikh of Sharjah, claiming his protection. Husa demanded that he be handed over to her, but this Sultan bin Saqr resolutely refused to do, contending that such an act was against all the traditions of his race. Feeling between Sharjah and Dubai had run rather high for several years, partly over a dispute as to which sheikh should have suzerainty over Hera, a minor sheikhdom, and partly because Sheikh Said bin Maktum disputed Sultan bin Saqr's succession to the sheikhdom of Sharjah.

The war which broke out over this incident lasted for several months, and was mainly guerilla in its tactics, although siege was laid to Dubai and the town was gallantly and successfully defended under the generalship of Husa herself, an event almost unparalleled in Arab history. It appeared that her husband had not wanted a war at all, and had tried to persuade his ministers to call a conference with Sultan bin Saqr and settle their quarrel by negotiation. This move not proving successful, the Sheikh of Dubai shut himself up in his room and refused to see anyone. His sons were not keen on fighting, either, and Raschid the elder, a pleasant, cultured man of thirty, continued his life of social ease, visiting his gardens by motor-car, adding to his collection of wives, and smoking his tiny-stemmed pipe. Husa was so infuriated by their indifference that she tore the veil from her face, donned sword and trousers, and took command of the fort and the army.

721 The total number of casualties on both sides numbered only about two hundred, dead and wounded, and at length the offices of the British Government were sought to mediate between the contestants. If the matter had been adjudicated by a court of arms, the laurels would probably have gone to Sharjah, which did much material damage to Dubai Town. At any rate, the peace

228 earliest times the sheikhs have derived a considerable proportion of their incomes from profits of the pearl trade, it is in their interest to pool their efforts during the season and abstain from hostilities. 422 703 The only men who are not allowed to take part in pearling are the sheikh's soldiers and guards, who are continually on duty, and are not allowed to leave their respective towns without permission. They are usually recruited from various tribes, never from a single tribe; so that there is little danger of disaffection or of combination against their employer.

Our own guards at the Fort, who numbered about forty men, were supplied by the Sheikh of Sharjah, but they were not natives of Oman. Known as Askharis, they originate from the hill districts of Muscat, and are noted for their fearlessness and toughness as fighters. They were a villainous-looking lot of ruffians, but I got to know them individually very well indeed, and liked them [522] immensely. They were always fond of a joke and had a broad sense of humour, even if it was sometimes childish. I could trust them implicitly, as they were possessed of a dog-like loyalty and would have laid down their lives for me. They were immensely proud of their responsibility in guarding the Fort, and were extremely hurt on one occasion when I asked Cranley to provide an R.A.F. guard for an aircraft which, owing to an engine change, had to be retained at Sharjah for the night. They considered that they should have been entrusted with the task, and sulked about it for days. The reason for my action was not distrust of the Askharis or their capabilities as guards, but the simple fact that according to our regulations a British military guard must be provided for aircraft.

They were paid rather badly by the sheikh, and in consequence were invariably on the cadge for food and items of discarded clothing. These requests were usually made through their leader, Khofan, a fine-looking old man with a silky white beard, who was a past master in the art of asking favours. He was so courteous and kindly that it was difficult to refuse him. One of his most persistent requests was that I should provide his men with a barousti hut outside the Fort, so that in wet or cold weather they would not have to make the journey to Sharjah. I should have liked to give him his hut, but unfortunately we had no labour or materials and the Public Works Department attached to the R.A.F. were far too busy with camp enlargements to be able to oblige me.

000 I have mentioned that tribal wars were largely due to a lack of

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

told me that he had persuaded a lesser sheikh to drink a bottle of rye.

A Shiekh, it may be explained, is another name for Chief, although nowadays many of these petty rulers regard themselves as Princes; their desert forts have become palaces, and the advisers and secretaries who form the 'court' have been elevated to the rank of Ministers. This local grandeur is self-assumed, and the only genuine Prince in the Oman peninsula is the Sultan of Muscat. The Bedouins jokingly refer to the town sheikhs as 'Sand Kings', and the description seems to be an apt one.

The word 'sheikh' is fairly common as a name in Arabia, although it does not connote royal blood or connexions; we had a coolie in the Fort who was called Sheikh Ahmed. Similarly, the word 'Saiyed' is much used as a name, but bears no relation to the title Saiyed, borne by alleged lineal descendants of the Prophet or his son-in-law.

The Arab world has practised the doctrines of Islam for close on thirteen centuries, yet even to-day one finds the people accepting ancient beliefs and superstitions which are the heritage of heathenism. The uneducated Arab firmly believes in the existence of djinns, and nothing will persuade him to venture near a *wadhi* or deserted building which tradition has made the home of these monsters. Good and bad luck are ascribed by the faithful to Allah, Whose ways are wise and inscrutable; yet even the orthodox will admit—a trifle shamefacedly, perhaps—that such and such a calamity was caused by a malicious djinn, or that the death of his favourite camel was due to the evil eye of a neighbour.

Demoniacal possessions are cured by dancing to the throb of drums, a survival, surely, of African rites, and it is significant that most of these primitive beliefs are held by Arabs of African or negro descent. But then, is there such a thing as a pure-blooded Arab? I have heard people describe themselves as being pure-blooded Irish, although they had less claim to consanguine purity than myself; they took no account of the Danish, Norman, Spanish and English invasions which swept the length and breadth of that small island over a thousand years. Just as the Irishman is basically Celt, the Arab is basically Semitic, but even the greatest ethnologist or anthropologist cannot track down with absolute certainty the ultimate origins of the Arab race; if it is one race. Head-measurements and the division of skulls into brachycephalic and dolchycephalic are all very well; they are useful for classifying the human

It was, indeed, a month of incidents. Several members of my Indian staff fell sick; I had trouble with the Sikh carpenters who had been sent from Karachi to re-build one of the launches, and they had to be sent back; the Bedouins had encamped on the sandhills between Sharjah and Dubai, and were giving trouble to our convoys; one of the turbines of the power station broke down, and a sit-down strike among the Arab workmen held up the work of building the new staff quarters' block. I had already been criticized by headquarters for not speeding up this work, which was not my responsibility but that of the Public Works Department.

The excuse given by the senior engineer was that shortage of materials was responsible for the delay, but on investigation it transpired that lack of proper supervision was the real cause of the trouble. The overseer was an Assyrian, and he had little authority over the Arabs, who would work only when they were closely watched. Directly the overseer's back was turned they would sit on the roof and go to sleep. The foundations and walls had been erected months ago, but the building was still roofless in May; as a result, the wooden frames of the doors and windows were beginning to shrink and crack. Eventually the supervision was put in charge of an R.A.F. corporal—a native of Cardiff—and within two weeks the Arabs were working like slaves and the roof was finished.

During this period I had numerous visitors who were far from welcome, but whom I had to entertain for political reasons. The Sheikh of Sharjah usually came twice a week, bringing his sons and secretary with him. As his visits usually lasted for two hours it meant that my morning's work was set aside. It was customary to serve him with fruit and coffee, either in the mess or on the roof-garden of the Fort, and on each occasion he managed to consume our total supplies of fruit. Quite often the bearers had to raid our staff supplies, from bedroom tables, in order to satiate his greed. I was obliged to sit through this gorging performance and make polite conversation.

The sheikh's visits always had an underlying motive; either he wanted to borrow spare parts for his car, or wished the radio officer to repair his wireless set; sometimes he wanted me to order him some fruit from India, or give him a supply of vegetable plants and flowers. When he sat in the mess, he invariably removed copies of *The Tatler* or *Country Life*, although he could read neither of these publications. These visits were made in ceremonial dress,

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

622 574 609 including gold swords and daggers, and he was accompanied by his ruffianly guard—who also expected coffee. There was nothing informal about Sheikh Sultan, and each time he came to the Fort I was obliged to make a rapid change from shorts and bush shirt into my palm beach uniform.

The Sheikh of Dubai, who never asked any favours but who once sent me two beautiful pearls as a gift, paid but one visit to the Fort. That was in the company of all the sheikhs of the Trucial Oman Coast, who assembled there to meet the British Resident, Sir Geoffrey Prior, and journey with him to the neutral territory of Baraimi, where he held a 'durbar'. Next to Sultan bin Saqr, my most frequent visitor was the picturesque Sheikh of Ajman, Raschid bin Hamid, a handsome man of thirty, who resembled the pre-Raphælite portraits of Christ. He was tall for an Arab, with an aristocratic bearing and clean-cut features. Of pure Bedouin stock, he had their fair skin and piercing blue eyes, and wore a carefully oiled and trimmed black beard. Raschid was the only sheikh in Oman to own horses, which are not suited to this part of the Arabian desert; he was a superb horseman and a great hunter.

Sheikh Raschid had a tremendous sense of humour and I believe he only came to the Fort to plague me. He would arrive at the most unexpected and inconvenient times, bringing with him a ruffianly rabble of hangers-on, including his chief minister, or wazir, Hussein, a grimy looking old villain who spoke a few words of execrable English. Sultan bin Saqr, who was his overchief, did not approve of these visits, since Raschid was only a sub-chief of Ajman, a small dependency of Sharjah. Raschid was full of intrigue, and was believed to be making secret agreements with the Americans, authorizing them to drill for oil on his territory; this was strictly against the treaty which Sultan bin Saqr had signed with the British Government and gave rise to considerable local embarrassment. The wily Raschid knew quite well that he could not implement his promises, and yet had no scruples in taking money for these illegal concessions.

The Khan Bahadur asked me on one occasion to try and discourage Raschid from paying his tiresome visits to the Fort, but he was so persistent that the task was a well-nigh impossible one. It was impossible to offend him; if one were at all brusque he would roar with laughter, take one by the arm and begin a long discussion about his latest hunting trip. I liked him immensely, for he was

really a most lovable ruffian, his Christ-like face contrasting oddly with the fanatical fire in his eyes. Hussein, his minister, despite his dirty clothes and unkempt beard, also amused me very much; he carried a huge sword, whilst his belt was always bulging with weapons—knives, Muscat daggers, and a Mauser pistol. He was the living embodiment of Captain Teach, the eighteenth century pirate.

Sheikh Raschid was always pestering me to visit his 'palace' at Ajman and accompany him on a gazelle hunt so, partly in order to placate him and partly because I liked the rascal, I eventually agreed to accept his invitation. I chose a week-end in May when, owing to bad weather at Barhain and Karachi, aircraft had been held up for a few days. Ellis, the Station Engineer, who had performed several tasks for the sheikh, was also invited, and we made arrangements to set off in one of the cars after lunch. A few minutes before we were due to leave the Fort three camels put in an appearance. The servant who brought them explained that Sheikh Raschid bin Hamid considered that they would be more comfortable for the journey.

As a rule I dislike riding camels; I consider they are one of the most uncomfortable modes of transport ever discovered. In this case, however, I was glad of them. The route to Ajman lies through tracks of deep, soft sand, in which the tyres of vehicles invariably get stuck. To extricate them is a long and difficult task, frequently requiring the aid of another vehicle. Soft sand is far worse than mud, and even if the wheels do not sink in it, they slip and slither all over the place, so that it is a matter of extreme luck if you do not hit a palm tree or a rock. Wheel chains are of little help, as they seem to plunge the car deeper into the sand. The only way to negotiate soft sand successfully is to drive at great speed and take a zig-zag course.

Ajman lay to the north of Sharjah, beyond the little fishing village of Hera; the distance was not more than five miles but the camels were slow and it took us an hour to reach the outskirts of the town. There are two Ajmans on the map—the town proper and the district surrounding it, which has an area of about ten square miles. Most of it is bare desert, full of *wadhis* and sandhills, but near the sea-shore there are flourishing date plantations, whereas Sharjah does not boast a single one.

The town is much pleasanter than Sharjah. The track leading to it is indescribably bad, being full of pot-holes, old wells, rocks

perfume and tobacco. He then took us by the hand and led us through the courtyard into the guest chamber. A terrace of black marble steps led up to it, through a little brass-studded door, which he unlocked. The chamber was a typical Arab interior. Shiraz and Turkish rugs covered the stone floor, and the furniture consisted of a Moorish-type table, inlaid with mother-o'-pearl, a cane settee, and a few plush-seated chairs. The walls, however, were not plain as were those of Sheikh Sultan's palace; leather saddles of sheepskin, decorated with red wool fringes, hung from iron hooks; there were numerous photographs of the sheikh and his relatives, as well as a small armoury. This included an old flintlock gun, a German Mauser pistol (presented to the sheikh by King Ibn Saud, from whom he bought his horses), a .22 Martini rifle, and a long hiltless battle sword in a black leather scabbard, richly decorated with bands of damascened gold.

Raschid showed us his armoury with great pride, and explained in detail the history of each exhibit. He then took the battle sword from the wall; it was at least five feet in length and, as he withdrew the blade from the scabbard, he gave it a quick twist with his wrist. The blade shivered and sang like a tuning fork. I tried to do the same but the sword was exceedingly heavy to handle and I failed to get any 'tune' out of it. Raschid told us that the sword was forged for his ancestors at Damascus four hundred years ago, and was a sword of honour. It had been used in battle, as a two-handed weapon, and was reputed to have slain a hundred men.

The sheikh's little son, Abdul bin Hamid, wore a curved Muscat dagger of great beauty, the scabbard and hilt being of chased gold. We sat on cushions on the floor, and were joined by the sheikh's elder son, aged eleven, and a four years' old girl, a black-eyed little mite with pigtails, who was evidently a great favourite of the sheikh's. She wore a little tunic of silk taffeta, richly embroidered short silk trousers and sandals of gazelle skin; her bare ankles were covered with silver rings. She looked thoroughly spoiled, and had the manner of an autocrat, screaming shrilly at her brother whenever he dared to touch her rag doll.

Hussein, the wazir, entered the chamber with a secretary and some other relatives of the sheikh, including an elderly uncle from Baraimi, and after we had exchanged greetings and washed our hands in the silver bowl, slaves were summoned to bring in the dinner. It was rather early for a meal, and we had not long since

had lunch, but it was not possible to decline the dishes placed before us. In the centre of the dining-mat was a huge bowl of rice and steamed sheep, very fat and oily; chipatties, truffles, curry, sheep's liver, and pastry puff balls filled with honey. The sheikh presented me with a large piece of fat with his own hands, and I felt sick before it had entered my mouth.

After the meal we again washed our hands and sat drinking out of little brass cups of bitter coffee. Cigarettes were produced and all smoked except the uncle from Baraimi. The conversation, as is customary during social calls, began with polite enquiries after one's health. Raschid then recounted some of his experiences in the hunting field, and sent his son to bring a pile of fine gazelle skins, trophies of the chase; one of especial beauty and fine marking he presented to me, together with a pair of horns. The wazir, Hussein, looked as though he were tired of the conversation, and produced a blackwood reed from the folds of his *abbas* and began to play a wistful little tune. Abdul bin Hamid sang in a high-pitched voice and we sat back on our cushions and listened. The tune was monotonous and without melody, but it had a weirdly fascinating rhythm.

The sheikh, whose tales of the hunt were thus rudely interrupted, grew restless; he belched aggressively and pulled at his beard. At length, losing all patience, he rose abruptly and signalled us to follow him through the courtyard. Hussein went on playing his melancholy tune, so we wandered through the fort with Raschid and his daughter. Scores of ragged children came into the courtyard to stare at us; they were nothing to do with the sheikh, unless they were children of his servants, and he took no notice of them. With his twinkling blue eyes, humorous mouth and hawk-like nose, he might have been an Eastern king, benevolent and wise, surrounded by his subjects. He had perfect teeth, stained at the edges by tobacco, and on his finely-shaped hand wore a large cornelian stone, engraved with an account of his descent. The Arabs do not as a rule have a crest or heraldic design, although some of the sheikhs display a badge, usually in the form of a crescent or sometimes a bird or lion which is engraved on seals and the backs of chairs.

Raschid on this occasion wore a very barbaric-looking turban of white and purple Kashmir wool and looked more like a pirate than ever. When we had seen over the fort, many of the rooms of which were completely bare, he conducted us to the stables

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

all the fun that he could out of desert life, yet he worked exceedingly hard and devoted several hours each day to the study of Arabic.

Tandy had been instructed to pay a visit to Djaidh to discuss with the tribal leaders the continuation of work on the wells which irrigate the large date plantations for which this district is famous. Djaidh, which is not a village but a district, lies about fifty miles east of Sharjah on the direct camel route, but the sand tracks are extremely soft for vehicular traffic and Tandy had chosen a circular route by way of Falat-al-'Ali and Muraq-quibat, where the road is reasonably good and has a hard surface. It added twenty miles to the journey, but the extra comfort and ease of travel compensated for this.

I had been invited to join the party, since Captain Tandy had expectations of meeting Sheikh Mahommed bin Ali, ruler of the wild Beni Quitab tribe of Bedouins. I had often expressed a wish to see this chief, whose fierceness and bold character were celebrated in Oman; I never expected to have this privilege, for the Beni Quitab lived in remote and inaccessible parts of the desert, mostly at the foothills of the Jebel-al-Faiyah range, and were continually changing their camping-ground. It was reported, moreover, that they were hostile to foreigners and that Sheikh Mahommed had met only two Europeans, one of them being Sir Geoffrey Prior, the British Resident, who had difficulty in finding him. Arabs are very chary of giving information to foreigners concerning the whereabouts of Bedouin tribes, presumably because they fear reprisals.

Owing to the waterless nature of Oman—which is, geographically, merely a coastal extension of the Great Southern Desert, or Rub-al-Khali—date plantations of any appreciable size are rare. On the Oman Gulf side of the peninsula, and at Muscat, they flourish to such an extent that their export forms one of the staple industries of this part of south-east Arabia, but west of the Shimailiyah the only large plantations are at Falaj-al-'Ali and Djaidh, where their ownership is shared by the tribes in common. Djaidh is neutral territory, but the responsibility for managing the plantations is divided between the Sheikhs of Sharjah and Kalba; the Sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah is responsible for the plantations at Falaj-al-'Ali, although the Sheikh of Umm-al-Quwain has some interest in this plantation. The district is inhabited by Kalba tribesmen, who live in encampments near the wells; they are responsible, through their headmen or sub-chiefs, for the maintenance of the irrigation

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

which buzzed around us. These *Badu*, whose ages ranged from twenty to eighty years of age, were all bearded and very dirty; although they were the notables of the camp, their clothing was ragged and scanty, and my preconceptions of the romantic nomad's life they led quickly vanished. They were, if the truth be told, mere gipsies of the desert, as wild and treacherous as the nomad can be.

Sheikh Hadi, who had left us to be stared at by these strange creatures, who plucked at their beards and whispered to one another (Tandy's bare legs were a subject of much scandalized comment), presently reappeared with his father. Sheikh Mohammed bin Ali, ruler of all the Beni Quitab tribes of Oman, was a magnificent figure, in spite of his eighty years. Over six feet tall, thin and sinewy, he had a flowing white beard and a pair of the keenest eyes I have ever seen. His face, dominated by a sharp, hawk-like nose, was the colour of old parchment and revealed great character and power. All stood up as he entered the tent, stooping low at the entrance, and there was a long silence as we were introduced by Sheikh Hamid.

When the Sheikh Mohammed had taken his place in the circle we returned to our squatting position, while Tandy alone conversed with the sheikh about the weather, the state of the crops and the health of the camels. The rest of us did not speak, eyeing the gnarled face of Mohammed, with its great, hooked nose and deep-set eyes, with something approaching awe. Then something which Tandy said made the old man laugh and the spell was broken. Cigarettes were produced and a babel of conversation broke loose. Tandy got down to business and discussed local politics, the irrigation project at Djaidh, and finally, realizing that the old man was in a good humour, asked him if he would provide guides for the Anti-Locust Commission, which wanted to enter the mountain pass beyond Jebel Faiyah.

'Praise Allah, but they are spies, these Indians!' the sheikh laughed. 'They want to map out my land and then build huts on it, like they did at Sharjah. Next, your Government will want to flatten the ground to make a nest for the great sky-birds, *ti-ara* (aeroplanes). Truly, the ways of Allah are mysterious and wonderful, but the ways of the foreigner are cunning.' The others considered this speech a huge joke, and laughed and applauded. Then Tandy, who is no mean diplomat, suggested that the Beni Quitab were afraid that the Anti-Locust party, by

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

poisoning the larvæ, would destroy the tribe's food supply. This produced more laughter, since the locust is only regarded as an occasional tit-bit and is not a regular part of their diet. The sheikh pulled his beard, roared with laughter at this sally, revealing his long, yellow fangs, and finally agreed to provide as many guides as the party required.

A shout from one of the guards caused Hadi to leap to his feet and run towards the entrance. He returned in a moment to inform us that a caravan of raiders, presumably *Badus*, had passed the encampment about a mile away. We hurriedly left the tent and were just in time to see the raiding party, which consisted of about fifty camels, disappearing in the dust at great speed. Hadi said they were moving in the direction of Dubai and probably had as their objective one of the numerous villages near the coast. Sheikh Mohammed denied that they were men of his tribe, but Tandy afterwards told me that there was some doubt as to the truth of this statement.

When we returned to the tent, a slave brought in bowls of warm camels' milk which were passed round the circle. It was very refreshing and had a sweet taste, though I did not relish drinking from the bowl after it had passed the lips of my exceedingly dirty hosts. In few, if any books on desert travel is the dirtiness of the Arabs referred to; this is either because the authors have become enured to their primitive surroundings and take them for granted, or else because they consider it bad form to allow such commonplace details to intrude into their art. Both St. John Philby and Mr. Bertram Thomas are liberal in their allusions to camel dung, but their awareness of the filth and odours of Arab towns is never made apparent to the reader. Unfortunately I was born with a fastidious mind and a nose as sensitive as an insect's antennæ, and no amount of admiration for the Arabs can make me oblivious of their habits, although some Arabs are far cleaner than many Europeans.

When the bowls of milk had been passed round we were pressed to partake of dates, covered thickly with flies, little squares of Turkish delight, chipatties with a coating of *ghi*, and good Arab coffee. After a smoke and some light conversation, we had more coffee, until Tandy, reminding the sheikh that we must take our departure, asked permission to leave. There was a very strong smell of camel in the tent; the creatures were tethered to ropes outside, and were growling and swearing because they were being

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

crowding into the Commission's truck, we left it in the desert under guard.

After an hour's journey we reached the Commission's encampment and had a hot meal of curried hash, potatoes, sweet tea and fruit, and settled down for the night. Yarning over the fire before we turned in, Captain Tandy told me that his father, an Army officer in the service of the Indian Government, had been murdered in the Nejd in 1913, whilst attempting to settle a frontier dispute with a Turkish delegate; a scuffle had ensued, during which Major Tandy had received a fatal knife wound.

The Arabs are great tale-tellers and Sheikh Hamid, listening to this account, could not hold back his version of the Kalba succession. It was the story of his uncle, Sheikh Khali bin Ahmed, now a feeble old man of eighty, who seldom left his territory on the western side of the Shimailiyah mountains. Twenty years ago, when Sultan bin Saqr (father of the present ruler of Sharjah), died, Khali, who was a near relative, succeeded him. The young son of Sheikh Sultan grew up under Khali's protection on the death of his father, but in 1924, the young and ambitious prince, who was twenty-six, decided that the time had come for him to rule Sharjah without Khali's help. To assist him in his plans he enlisted the aid of the Sheikh of D[illegible] and drove Khali out, compensating him in characteristic Arab fashion by granting him a parcel of land at Djaidh, which he illegally claimed as a dependency.

Shortly afterwards the Sheikh of Kalba died, and there was a dispute between Sultan bin Saqr, who belonged to the same clan as Kalba, the Quasimi, and the Sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah, over the ascendancy. The Sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah belonged to a different tribe and had no prescriptive right to the sheikhdom, but he regarded Kalba as strategically part of his territory. The dispute was temporarily settled by the action of the British Government, which appointed Khali as Regent of Kalba until the sheikh's young son, Hamid bin Sayid, came of age. This seemed to be an ideal arrangement, since Khali was unmarried and had no descendants for whom he might entertain ambitions.

Unfortunately Khali was no sooner confirmed as Regent than he began to cast covetous eyes on the sheikhdom. Although he was sixty-four he soon found a bride and by her had four sons. Within two years the young Sheikh Hamid will be of age and, presumably, will ascend the throne; this will not be at all to Khali's liking, for his own sons are growing up and he would prefer to

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

622 see them rule Kalba. The situation is a delicate one, and although young Hamid is under the protection of both the British Government and Sheikh Sultan bin Saqr, he is living under a shadow. The Government wished to send him away to school, but he recently ran away from an establishment at Bahrain and lives in the Sheikh's palace at Sharjah, in constant fear of being murdered. Should that fate befall him, it is likely that a war between Sharjah and Kalba would be precipitated, with Ras-al-Khaimah and Dubai participating.

This account of Kalba's succession I have related elsewhere, but I give it again because it differs in some respects from the official version. It is a situation which, unless handled with care, might easily be the cause of a long internecine war between the tribes.

3: Melamid S-3 (no date) 1954 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

rural and town populations there is a constant proportion of two to one. The average distance between "dorps" (villages with a population of some 2000) is 72 miles, and each dorp serves an average area of 2696 square miles. In contrast, a population center of about the same size in the canton of Zurich serves an average area of only 20 square miles. The wide-mesh distribution and great distances between central services are both costly and inconvenient and are only partly offset by the fact that every farm is able to supply its working population with essential foods such as corn and with tobacco. The present trend in the Karroo is a scientific attempt to adapt the economy more closely to the environment.—DONALD R. PETTERSON

ASIA

OIL AND THE EVOLUTION OF BOUNDARIES IN EASTERN ARABIA. Since my research for the paper on the "Political Geography of Trucial 'Oman and Qatar" (*Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 43, 1953, pp. 194–206) was completed, hopes for the discovery of oil have led to further developments in the evolution of states and boundaries in eastern Arabia.

In Trucial 'Oman the maritime truces and treaties with Great Britain oblige the sheikhs (the so-called "Trucial sheikhs") to enforce the agreements (for example, suppression of slave trade) in their own territories. In the neutral areas of Trucial 'Oman no Trucial sheikh has any authority, yet Great Britain cannot enforce the treaties either, for they leave all affairs on land exclusively in the hands of the sheikhs. These shortcomings, particularly significant today in matters of oil concessions and development, have caused the abandonment of the concept of neutral areas in Trucial 'Oman. Such areas are now considered to be part of the territory of one or another of the Trucial sheikhs, who are thus able to exercise their authority. For similar reasons the Trucial sheikhdom of Kalba, the subject of many disputes, is no longer recognized; its former territory is now parceled among other Trucial sheikhdoms. The sheikhdom of Fujaira, which effectively occupies an area near the Gulf of 'Oman, has now been elevated to Trucial rank, with all rights and obligations. As the result of these developments, political conditions in Trucial 'Oman are much more stable today than ever before. This fact in itself, independent of the discovery of oil, may account for recent economic growth. The accompanying table summarizes some of the recent changes in the seven Trucial sheikhdoms of 'Oman. Additional information, particularly for the guidance of travelers, is available in the "Handbook on the Persian Gulf" published by the British Foreign Office (1953). No demarcation of boundaries between Trucial sheikhdoms has yet been reported, and since the basic political relations between the sheikhs remain the same, war may flare up at any time, though in view of the recent economic changes this is believed to be less likely than before.

With the abandonment of the concept of neutral areas in Trucial 'Oman, six villages of the oasis—or, rather, group of oases—called Buraimi (Muwaiqih, Mataradh, Al Ain, Jimi, Qattara, and Hilli), inhabited by the Abu Falah tribe, are now considered to be, and are administered as, a part of Abu Dhabi. The village of Buraimi, inhabited by the Naim tribe, which is reported to graze its herds to the east of the oasis, is part of the Sultanate of Muscat and 'Oman, and thus outside Trucial 'Oman. The remaining village of the oasis, Hamasa, inhabited by the Bu Sham tribe (also reported to graze its herds southeast of the oasis), is occupied by Saudi Arabia (see Melamid, *op. cit.*, p. 204, footnote 23) and claimed

[see p. 296--Analyst]

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
Trucial Oman MK4

and is said to be a meeting-ground of the Beni Yās, Manāsīr, and Na'īm tribes.

Of the islands, only *Dalmah* and *Yās* need be described. The former lies more than 40 miles E. by S. of the mouth of the *Khōr el-'Odeid*, and about half that distance from the nearest point of the coast to the SE. It is 5 miles by 2½ miles, and for the most part hilly, with wells of brackish water and deposits of red oxide of iron. There is a small settlement of Beni Yās; but the chief importance of the island is that at the end of the pearling season a temporary bazaar is set up, and persons engaged in the trade, including the Indian merchants of the Trucial Coast, go there to collect debts and purchase pearls. Yās is about 20 miles SE. of Dalmah, and only a few miles from the shore at Jebel Dhannah. It is 6½ miles by 5 miles, with low shores, but central volcanic hills; at the S. end is a landlocked natural harbour known to British sailors as Meriton Bay, with a depth of 4–6 fathoms. Water is only obtainable after rain. The island is visited in winter by Beni Yās fishermen.

II. Dibai

This small principality lies on the Gulf Coast S. of Shārjah, between Abu Heil on the N. and the creek Khōr Ghanādhah on the S.; its extent towards the interior is not precisely known. It consists of low sandy country without important natural features, the only hill being Jebel el-'Āli, 19 miles SW. of Dibai town, which, though only 225 ft. high, is a landmark visible for 17 miles. The town contains almost the whole settled population, the only other places with permanent inhabitants being the small coast village of *Jumeirah*, 3 miles to the SW., and the larger isolated village of *Hajarein*, 50 miles away to the SE. in the Wādi Hatta, an isolated dependency, geographically belonging to the Sultanate of Oman.

The ruler of Dibai is Sheikh Sa'īd ibn Makhtūm, who succeeded his cousin Būti ibn Suheil in 1912, and is at feud with the latter's family. He is a wealthy chief, owing to the commercial importance of his capital, but his relations with the Indian Government have not been uniformly good; in August 1913 he had to be warned because a boat of H.M.S. *Sphinx* was fired on from the town. There had been trouble under previous rulers, chiefly owing to the use of Dibai by smugglers of arms (see above, p. 336).

The town of **Dibai**, with a population perhaps not far from 20,000, lies 7 miles SW. of Shārjah and 79 miles NE. of Abu Dhabi, on both sides of a creek with a shallow entrance extending some miles to the SE.; it was once walled, but with the exception of towers on